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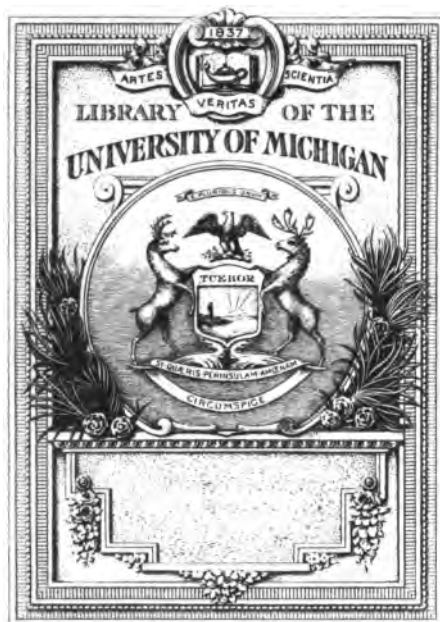
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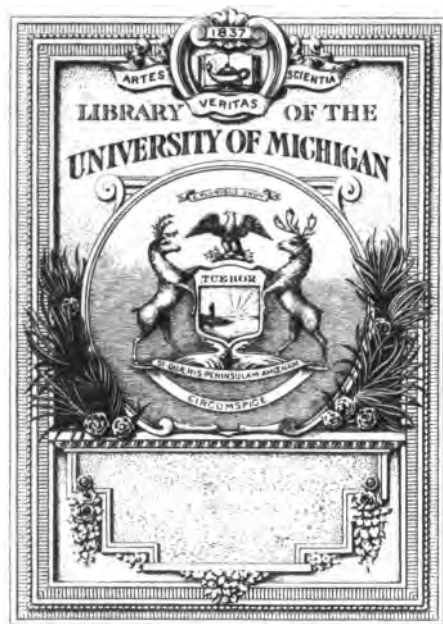


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A QUEEN'S ROMANCE

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in 1904.*

J. D.

A QUEEN'S ROMANCE

A VERSION OF VICTOR HUGO'S

"RUY BLAS"

WRITTEN FOR LEWIS WALLER

BY

JOHN DAVIDSON




LONDON

GRANT RICHARDS

48, LEICESTER SQUARE

1904



CHISWICK PRESS: CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

Liben.
Grant
3-6-28
16444

PERSONS

03-29-28 LWB
RUY BLAS.
DON SALLUSTE DE BAZAN.
DON CÆSAR DE BAZAN.
DON GURITAN.
THE MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ.
THE MARQUIS OF BASTO.
THE COUNT OF ALBA.
DON ANTONIO UBILLA.
MONTAZGO.
COVADENGA.
GUDIEL.
A Lackey.
An Alcaid.
An Usher.
An Alguazil.

DONNA MARIA DE NEUBERG, Queen of Spain.
THE DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE.
CASILDA.
A Duenna.
Lords, ladies, privy councillors, etc.

Madrid, 16—

A QUEEN'S ROMANCE

ACT I

SCENE.—*The Hall of Danae in the Royal Palace,
Madrid.*

Enter DON SALLUSTE and GUDIEL.

Don Salluste. Open the window. — Is it morning yet?

Gudiel. The west begins to mantle with the dawn.

Don Salluste. Who waits below?

Gudiel. No one: the palace sleeps.

Don Salluste. A thunderbolt out of a cloudless sky!

My reign is done! Derided, banished, lost;

And in an hour, all for a stolen kiss!

A saucy nobody, a hanger-on,

That blubbered out her story to the Queen!

And I'm to marry her, because—you know?

Gudiel. She is her Grace's countrywoman.

Don Salluste.

"Sir,

You must espouse her." 'Twas commanded me!
Death, torture, exile—anything but that!

Gudiel. Are you dismissed, my lord?

Don Salluste.

Without reprieve!

But to be exiled after twenty years
Of ceaseless toil, when I began to reap
The harvest of ambition; to be hurled
From power, bereft of honour, fame, despoiled
Of all my deeds, robbed of my very dreams—
An outcast with the mockery of the world
To speed and welcome me where'er I go!

Gudiel. None know of this as yet?

Don Salluste.

There's comfort there.

To-morrow?—Let them know: I shall be gone.
The gossips ne'er shall prattle of my fall:
The word shall be, "Don Salluste disappeared."
But I will burrow underneath their mines—
A sunken, subterranean scheme, my hand
Undreamt of in it! . . . Fallen!

Gudiel.

Did the Queen

Consent in your dismissal?

Don Salluste.

'Twas her act!

I will return her visit: mete her out
Her measure; fame for fame; a heaped re-
venge.—

Prepare our hasty journey. Not a word
Even to your pillow in the dead of night.

[GUDIEL goes out.

[*Speaking from the window.*] Don Cæsar de
Bazan.—The humorous rogue

Must serve my purpose at whatever cost.—
Disgraced and banished for a serving-maid!

Enter DON CÆSAR DE BAZAN.

Well, outlaw?

Don Cæsar. Well, cousin?

Don Salluste. I always esteem it a great
honour to encounter so notable a scamp.

Don Cæsar. Delighted.

Don Salluste. Sir, there are stories told of
you.

Don Cæsar. Much to your satisfaction, I
feel sure.

Don Salluste. Oh, eminently satisfactory!
Who stole Don Charles de Mira's sword and
baldric and left him his cloak?

Don Cæsar. Left him his cloak? Save us, why?

Don Salluste. Because Don Charles is a knight of St. James, and the arms of the order were embroidered on the collar.

Don Cæsar. Such niceties in thieving! Indeed, indeed we live in very scandalous times! In Heaven's name and the devil's cousin, where will all this end? Shall footpads court St. James and count him of their number?

Don Salluste. But you were with them?

Don Cæsar. Me, cousin? True; I confess—since I must—that I was there; but I laid no finger on Don Charles. I only gave instructions. You know, when several men are employed upon a thing, there must always be some one to stand by and see that it is done.

Don Salluste. Last night when the moon had gone down the riff-raff of the city trooped from their filthy dens and in the market-place attacked the King's Guards. You—saw that it was done. Farther, in France you plundered the excise—a most insolent theft.

Don Cæsar. France and Spain are enemies.

Don Salluste. In Flanders, too, you robbed a priest of monies belonging to the Church—gross sacrilege.

Don Cæsar. In Flanders? It's not impossible. I've travelled in many lands. Is that all?

Don Salluste. Don Cæsar, when I think of you, shame stings me to the marrow.

Don Cæsar. Buzz! Let it sting!

Don Salluste. Our family——

Don Cæsar. Need not be thought of. In all Madrid you alone know my real name. Zafari, I am called, the handsome, the gay, the good.

Don Salluste. And the sworn ally of the Gallican thief, Matalobos, the terror of the capital.

Don Cæsar. Now, a truce to your reproaches, cousin. Let us discourse of my affairs rationally.—True enough I am Don Cæsar de Bazan, Count of Garofa, Grandee of Spain and near of kin to you; but you must remember that divine folly herself was my foster-mother.

Don Salluste. Divine folly? Infernal lunacy, you mean. Before you saw one-and-twenty, of

all your treasure, your palaces, your lands—
not a maravedi, not a stone, not a rood re-
mained in your possession.

Don Cæsar. Aha! for each maravedi, each
stone, each rood, cousin, I can count a feast, a
game, a kiss.

Don Salluste. Yes, but to denude yourself of
every mark of rank and breeding.

Don Cæsar. Except my creditors! Oho! A
noble pack that opened on my scent, worthy a
prince's trail.

Don Salluste. Ah! Therefore it was you
changed your name to Zafari, and let report
despatch Don Cæsar to the Indies?

Don Cæsar. To the devil, if you like! In
the meantime, cousin, will you lend me ten
crowns.

Don Salluste. Listen——

Don Cæsar. Oh, the sermon first.

Don Salluste. No; my purpose is to pluck
you, if you will, from the misery in which
you are sunk. Childless and growing old, I
have the fancy to know something of a father's
cares at least. So, kinsman, reprobate though

you are, I wish to pay your debts and settle you at court. Bury the gay Zafari, and from his dust let Cæsar promptly rise. All I have is at your command. The claims of kindred, which I have too long neglected, assert themselves at last. We are of one blood; let us have one purse.

Don Cæsar. Wit, wisdom, eloquence!

Don Salluste. There is only one stipulation——

Don Cæsar. Ah!

Don Salluste. —which I shall explain presently. In the meantime—this. [*Gives DON CÆSAR a purse.*]

Don Cæsar. Magnificent! So far.

Don Salluste. And you shall have five hundred ducats——

Don Cæsar. Cousin!

Don Salluste. Every month.

Don Cæsar. Yours always to command. Now for the stipulation.

Don Salluste. Simply this—that you retire to France under your name of Zafari for six months.

Don Cæsar. Now in the name of all the Muses is this an opera you are in labour with?

Don Salluste. Although I mean to employ Zafari, it is Don Cæsar I wish to address. You shall be rich; but upon this condition: that you aid me by your absence to spread a net subtler than any man ever wove before to snare his chosen prey. I devise a means of vengeance unique in history or legend.

Don Cæsar. Vengeance!

Don Salluste. Vengeance!

Don Cæsar. On whom?

Don Salluste. A woman.

Don Cæsar. Not for the world! I'll speak my mind of this!

The man who owns a sword, and yet by stealth

And villainous device would take revenge,
And on a woman—Heavens!—were he the
King

Himself, I hold the meanest of the mean,
Deserving only to be whipped to death,
And hung in quarters on the city gate.

Don Salluste. Don Cæsar——

Don Cæsar. Keep your bribe—as I will keep
Your shameful secret.

Don Salluste. Cousin——

Don Cæsar. Not a word!

Your tarnished money I can live without.

I have my liberty: the air is sweet

In woods and fields; and in the winter time

Some honest thief will gladly shelter me.

Conspire and fester with your sordid kind,

The maggots of the court! Give me, sweet

Heaven,

The gentle rogues and cut-throats whom I
love.

Don Salluste. Well said, indeed! I feared
you had become

A hardened villain; you have stood a test

That would have tainted many a virtuous mind.

Cousin, your hand; you conquer my respect.

Don Cæsar. What turn is this?

Don Salluste. All I proposed was meant
To prove you. I have cracked the shell and find
The spendthrift's conscience healthy at the
core.

Don Cæsar. And set the spendthrift dreaming.
Vengeance, plots;

A woman . . .

Don Salluste. All inventions, lures, decoys.

Don Cæsar. So far, so good. The means to
pay my debts,

And the five hundred ducats? Lures, decoys?

Don Salluste. Oh, no; substantial. You shall
have them now.

*Enter RUY BLAS upon a signal from DON
SALLUSTE.*

Don Cæsar. His tongue drops honey, but
his looks are sour.

Don Salluste. Remain here, Ruy Blas. I
come again.—

In stature, carriage, years, they're not unlike.

[*Goes out.*]

Don Cæsar. Faith, hope and charity, it's
Ruy Blas!

But I could dance with joy to see you, man!

Ruy Blas. And I, Zafari. Shipwreck or
halcyon wind,

Fashion or state affairs—what brings you here?

Don Cæsar. The storm of chance blows me
about the world.

Cage up your eagles; give Zafari—space.
That's all he wants.—This livery? A disguise?

Ruy Blas. Some men disguised are in their
truest form;
And some unmasked, are then least like them-
selves.

Don Cæsar. Oh, riddles!

Ruy Blas. Come—both hands! I love you
—rogue;

And many a time recall perplexing noons
When hunger, like Prometheus' vulture,
gnawed

Our entrails, and we laughed; unending nights
When snow-clad tempests stuck us through
and through

With icicles, as thick as witches pin
Their waxen images; or summer hours
From purple dawn till dusk when bubbling
mirth

O'erbrimmed our hearts like vintage-laden
vats,

And sleep, a truant goddess, deep in love

With you and me, stole from on high to lull
The tumult of our blood beneath the stars
That lit our canopy and watched our dreams.
Those famous days of rapture and despair
When we were free!

Don Cæsar. It was a mournful hour,
That took you from me.

Ruy Blas. But you are as you were—
Happy and rich in poverty and rags.

Don Cæsar. And you?

Ruy Blas. Of me unconscious destiny
Has made a bitter jest.

Don Cæsar. Return it, then!

Ruy Blas. Unknown and penniless, what can
I do!

The pompous charity that parted us—
Uncharitably; and to which I owe
What little lore I have, awaked a thirst
It never thought to quench, then cast me out
A dreamer in a world of frantic wrong.
And yet I hoped, I claimed all things from fate.
Haggard and lean, shoeless and hung with rags,
That made a pageant of my nakedness,
I stalked the streets, a paragon of woe

To every stare-about: in my own mind
 Master of men, and the deliverer
 Of Catholic Spain that totters to her doom.
 By ghostly whispers urged, by visions led,
 I seemed to move toward some great end un-
 known.

The world had need of me, I felt; but want . . .
 Oh God, a lackey!

Don Cæsar. Want's a lowly door
 Beneath whose burdened lintel proudest heads
 Must stoop and cower with most humility.
 I whisper "hope," for, when the tide is out,
 Straightway it must begin to flow again.

Ruy Blas. My master is Don Salluste.

Don Cæsar. I conceive!

You live here in the palace?

Ruy Blas. Till to-day

I never crossed its threshold.

Don Cæsar. Strange! His place
 Makes this Don Salluste's residence.

Ruy Blas. I know;
 But scarce a hundred steps beyond the gates,
 He keeps a house of mystery where I dwell,
 And supervise a pair of Berber mutes,

Who neither know my master's name nor mine.
Sometimes at night in mask and domino
Don Salluste enters with his confidants;
They whisper furtively; and so depart—
Like swarthy ghosts escaping from the tomb.

Don Cæsar. His spies and he—a nest ob-
scene, where lives

Are slowly drained and reputations stripped
As bare as skeletons.

Ruy Blas. He builds his power
On man's depravity and rules by fear.—
Last night he bade me at the break of day
Attend him in the palace, secretly,
Wearing this livery. The lackey's dress
To-day I don for the first time; but why
He so degrades me—I shall understand.

Don Cæsar. Doff it, and fly with me! Can
Ruy Blas

Be slave to any man? I'll not believe it!
What self-subjection holds you captive here?

Ruy Blas. You shall be told. To wear this
loathsome garb,
That shrouds the soul, and quenches and revokes
The pride of manhood and the joy of life,

Is welcome ease when in my heart I feel
Those pangs of flame and glowing hydra-coils
That burn and cling with torture exquisite.

Don Cæsar. What do you mean?

Ruy Blas. Invent, elaborate
Profound conceits that frenzy would deride;
Rummage the most obscure abyss of thought
By hardiest spirits shunned, you still should
fail

To capture good or ill that dare approach
The terror and the glory of my dream.—
Not with the distant, unimpassioned love
That chivalry devised and subjects owe
Imperial beauty, but as man loves woman
I love the Queen of Spain.

Don Cæsar. Frenzy indeed!

Ruy Blas. At Aranjuez or at the Escorial,
Or here beneath this roof, in sumptuous state,
A certain man is served on bended knee
And watched with awe; to greet him covered
marks

The highest honour; at his nod high heads .
Leap from their trunks; his whims become
events;

His sceptre over-reaches half the world;
And I, the lackey, impotent and poor,
Am torn with jealousy of him who sits
Alone, superb, and sheathed in majesty,
Am mad with envy of the King of Spain.

Don Cæsar. Unhappy man! How could so
mad, so vain,
So terrible a passion master you?

Ruy Blas. I cannot tell; how does the dawn
appear
And fill with fire the dusky soul of night?
I see her from my window: on that day
She passes not I fast as if for sin,
And Time is poorer by a jewelled hour.

Don Cæsar. Letter or token—have you dared
to send?

Ruy Blas. She loves a watchet flower, here
scarcely known,
That grows by every hedgerow in her land.
I sought and found it near a nut-brown brook
A league beyond the city—newly fallen
From Heaven it seemed. At midnight, robber-
like,
I vault the wall that girds the royal park
And leave upon a dial-stone, her eyes

Each morning bless, the simple buds she loves.

Don Cæsar. The wall's embattled like a wild
boar's chine:

Some night you'll leave your brisket on its
spikes.

Ruy Blas. And if it were my heart! Tired
of my life,

I'd yield it for a glance. One night I placed

A letter with the posy. Did she find it?

If she has read it—read the words I wrote!

Could I but know what happens to my flowers!

Don Cæsar. You play a perilous game.

Ruy Blas. I play a game

In which I freely stake my soul's salvation.

If that wild legend of a pact with hell

Be true at all, and spirits hear our prayers,

I bid the powers august of darkness know

That I would spend eternity in pain,

To be like these young lords of pleasure clad

In rich attire, who pass with haughty frown

The royal portal and salute the Queen.

And yet, Zafari, though a scornful "No"

Rode on my tongue when to the lackey's garb

Don Salluste sentenced me, I reined it back,

Remembering that this deep disgrace is linked

With harrowing joy: for I am here—am
here! . . .

She sleeps, she wakes, she breathes within these
walls;

Her fancies brood about me; words she spoke
Like sprinkled odours linger in the air;

I feel her presence: here she sat, a queen

Imagining delight for all the earth;

And like a lily here her hand has lain

Divinely dreaming: a soul is in her hand.

Her eyes shall lighten on me when she comes—

Not seeing me, or seeing only this;

[*Clutching his dress.*]

But I shall still behold her face to face!

And if I die—I think, indeed, my heart

Will beat my bosom open and escape

To be her footstool!—if I die, I die

More blest than any lover that ever loved,

With that one vision of the queen to be

My happiness throughout eternity.

*Re-enter DON SALLUSTE, carrying a plumed hat,
a sword, and a large purse.*

Don Salluste. Here is the money.

Don Cæsar. The devil! Can it be This evil shape has heard our whole discourse? Well, he must have his due.—Don Salluste, thanks!

[DON CÆSAR empties the contents of the purse on the table where DON SALLUSTE has placed it, and handles the ducats rapturously, disposing them in piles.

At a signal from DON SALLUSTE three Alguazils enter unobserved by the others.

Don Salluste. [*Whispering to the Alguazils.*] You will follow that insane tatterdemalion; seize him; and conduct him by the shortest route to Denia. There is the order. Afterwards you will sell him, heedless of his chimerical complaints, to the corsairs of Algiers. You shall have a thousand piastres.

[*The Alguazils go out.*

Don Cæsar. There is no greater solace, no greater entertainment in the world than to count up one's money and strike a balance. Ruy Blas, here is your share.

Ruy Blas. What!

Don Cæsar. Take it, old friend. Be free.

Ruy Blas. You cannot free my heart. My fate is here: I must not fly it.

Don Cæsar. So let it be, then; but I wonder if God Himself knows which is really the fool—you or I. Good-bye.

Ruy Blas. Good-bye. [DON CÆSAR goes out.

The Alguazils re-enter and go out after

DON CÆSAR.

Don Salluste. Ruy Blas.

Ruy Blas. Excellency.

Don Salluste. You wore a cloak when you arrived here this morning?

Ruy Blas. Yes, Excellency.

Don Salluste. No one belonging to the palace has seen your livery?

Ruy Blas. No one.

Don Salluste. Good. You write well, I remember. You shall act as my secretary. First, a billet-doux. I hide nothing, you see. To My Queen of Love—that she-devil I mistook

for an angel.—Ready? “A terrible danger besets me. You, my Queen, you alone, can deliver me. Come to my house at once; come, or I am lost. The bearer will conduct you. I kiss your feet; and strew beneath your steps my head, my heart, my life.” Now, sign.

Ruy Blas. Your name, Excellency.

Don Salluste. No; in these affairs I use a name most renowned both in love and war. Sign “Cæsar.”

Ruy Blas. The lady will not know the writing.

Don Salluste. The seal will suffice.—Ruy Blas, I go hence to-night, and leave you here. I have always had your future much in my thoughts, and I purpose a surprising change in your condition, to effect which you must yield me henceforth blind obedience. You wonder why I reduced you to the rank of a lackey? That is part of my scheme, as you shall learn in due time. I have found you hitherto, faithful, reliable, discreet; I now wish to open before you a destiny more befitting your merit,

which, indeed, deserves what I intend for you, a place among the highest in the land.

Ruy Blas. To whom shall I address the letter?

Don Salluste. I shall attend to that. I hope from my heart that your career will be most prosperous and happy. Write, "I, Ruy Blas, lackey to his Excellency, Don Salluste de Bazan, engage to obey him faithfully as his hired servant in public and in private, and to fulfil all his commands without question while life and liberty are mine."

Ruy Blas. [*To himself.*] The powers of darkness take me at my word.

Don Salluste. Sign. Your own name. Date it. [*Folds and places in his pocket both documents.*] Where did I leave that sword? Ah! A silken baldric of the finest broidery, the newest fashion. And how does this strike you, Ruy Blas? The hilt, by Gil, the prince of engravers, who chisels out a lozenge-box in the pommel of a sword to please the ladies! Let me see how it becomes you. By Heaven, a very gallant Lord! [*The sound of steps is heard.*] What's that? Ah, the Queen holds her morn-

ing levée; the court will be here immediately.

[*Throws his own cloak over RUY BLAS's shoulders.*]

Enter the MARQUIS OF BASTO.

Give me leave, your Grace, to present my cousin, Don Cæsar de Bazan, the Count of Garofa?

Basto. Charmed, my lord.

Don Salluste. [*To RUY BLAS.*] Salute him.

Basto. I had the honour of your mother's friendship. [*To DON SALLUSTE.*] He is very much altered. I should hardly have known him.

Don Salluste. Ten years, my lord.

Basto. Doubtless.

Don Salluste. At all events we are delighted to have him back again. L'enfant prodigue! You remember, Marquis, how he made the money fly. Ruined in three years; really a notable achievement.

Basto. Quite in the first rank. Where has he been?

Don Salluste. He has just returned from the Indies.

Ruy Blas. My Lord——

Don Salluste. Tuts, man!—cousin. Whatever else may be said about them the Bazans have always been frank with each other.

Ruy Blas. Then I'll be frank!

Enter DON ALVAR DE BAZAN, MARQUIS OF
SANTA CRUZ.

Don Salluste. My lord of Santa Cruz, my cousin, Don Cæsar de Bazan, Count of Garofa, near Velalcazar. Don Cæsar, my lord, is of the Aragon stock, while I, you remember, came out of Portugal: I am the fruit of one branch of the family; he is the flower of the other. My cousin, Don Cæsar.

Santa Cruz. My cousin too, then. Let me—let me expound to you precisely the degree of relationship. Our common ancestor was Iniguez d'Ivisa. His son—no, it was his grand-

son, Pedro d'Ivisa. This Pedro d'Ivisa married in first nuptials Marianne de Gor, and their son John, Admiral in Philip II.'s time—and, by the way, I have always held that Medina Sidonia was not the man to command the Invincible Armada. If John O'Visa——

Ruy Blas. True, Marquis; if John d'Ivisa had commanded the Invincible Armada you might now be gossiping at the Spanish Court of St. James's in London.

Several Courtiers, including the COUNT OF ALBA, who is almost blind, have entered in the meantime.

Don Salluste. My cousin, Don Cæsar de Bazan.

Alba. Don Cæsar de Bazan? Not that Don Cæsar who was dead?

Ruy Blas. The same.

Alba. Miracles will never cease. How are they all . . . [*Pointing downwards.*

Ruy Blas. In the Indies, my lord? Quite warm enough for most people. I see you remember me well.

Alba. Remember you? I remember your birth.

Don Salluste. He's as blind as a bat.

Ruy Blas. And recognizes me with special emphasis to prove the keenness of his vision.

Alba. [*Addressing vacancy.*] I am delighted to see you, my lord. Delighted.

Santa Cruz. What a magnificent constitution he must have! Consider the life he led! And yet he looks the image of health.

Don Salluste. He is a new man, my lord. I mean to pay his debts, and hope to place him at court. Can I count on your good offices?

Santa Cruz. He seems a very deserving youth; and—my cousin. If I cannot find a kinsman a decent sinecure, it is high time for Spain to slip under the Atlantic.

Don Salluste. Thanks, my Lord. [*Introducing RUY BLAS to a number of Courtiers.*] Don Cæsar de Bazan.

Ruy Blas. Cousin! [*Takes DON SALLUSTE aside.*] I will not do this thing!

[*DON SALLUSTE shows RUY BLAS his signature.*]

Write that across
The skies in letters huge as monoliths;
I care not: you would make my life a lie!
The lackey's garb is honour and renown
Beside this cloak of shame; take it, and bait
Your devil's trap for those that can be caught!
I shall go free!

Usher. [*Opening a door at the back.*]

The Queen, my lords.

Ruy Blas. The Queen!

[*The QUEEN appears in a gallery accompanied by Ladies and Pages.*]

Don Salluste. Thank Heaven, your fit is past!

A touch of the sun

Which few escape in the Indies.—Your hat,
my lord,

The grandee's right. In ten years one forgets
So many things.

Ruy Blas. What do you want with me?

Don Salluste. To love that woman and to
win her love.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The Queen's Apartments in the Royal Palace, Madrid. The QUEEN, with CASILDA, is seated at an embroidery frame. Present also the DUCHESS OF ALBUQUERQUE and several young ladies. DON GURITAN on guard.*

Queen. I can hardly yet believe that Don Salluste is gone.

Casilda. Three days ago, madam; and without a whisper or a sign, they say.

Queen. And that is what troubles me: those who disappear and make no sign are apt to re-appear in some signal manner.

Casilda. Why should the thought of this man haunt you so, madam? You are stronger than he; you have banished him; and there's an end.

Queen. Whilst he lives, there will be no end
to Don Salluste's hate.

Casilda. Hate?

Queen. Of me, Casilda.

Casilda. Your Majesty——

Queen. I know it in my heart!

Upon the last day of Don Salluste's power
While all the nobles passed before the throne
To kiss my hand, and I across the gloom
Mused on a battle painted on the wall,
My gaze, withdrawn a moment, lit on him,
Approaching stealthily. His glance of fire
Appalled my spirit. As his fingers sought
His apt stiletto, and the glittering blade
Appeared and vanished like an adder's tongue.
Swiftly he bent, a subtle writhing form,
And on my hand I felt his serpent-mouth.

Casilda. He rendered homage only—like the
rest.

Queen. His lip was not like theirs; for in my
dreams

I meet this evil thing that touched my hand,
I see his treacherous glances menace me,
And through my veins, home to my heart itself

His icy kiss like curdling venom steals.

Casilda. The merest fancy, madam!

Queen. Indeed, I have a deeper grief than that. No, hardly to myself should it be told.—
Casilda, you remember those famishing creatures who were so poor that they feared to beg. See if they have come to-day again.

Casilda. Yes, madam; they are in the square, gazing hungrily at the palace as if it were built of loaves.

Queen. I am glad they have come back. Throw them out my purse, *Casilda*—that is all I may do. If I could only bring comfort to Spain herself!

Casilda. Madam, you who are so gracious and free-handed, have you nothing for pity's sake, to toss Don Guritan's way?

Queen. He is very tedious, *Casilda*.

Casilda. Oh, madam! A brave old fellow, with a chivalrous love for you that makes his very armour glow.

Queen. Well!—Good evening, Don Guritan!

[DON GURITAN *kisses the QUEEN'S hand.*]

Don Guritan. How divine the Queen is to-day!
[*Returns to his post.*]

Casilda. He reminds me always of a heron who dotes the day through, perched on one leg by the margin of a swamp.

Queen. Truly! No swamp could be more stagnant than the court of Spain.

Casilda. "Good morning" or "good night" is all he ever catches; but he is in raptures and thinks it the best of fishing.

Queen. Hush, child!

Casilda. Only to see you, madam, is for Don Guritan joy unspeakable.

Queen. I must not think! I dare not!—Bring me a book, *Casilda*. Let me see, now. Ah! bring me . . . Am I losing my wits? There's not a single German book in the palace. All Spanish, Spanish, Spanish! And my Spanish husband—always away! [*Addressing a portrait of the king which hangs on the wall.*] For six months, my lord, you have not been to see me half a dozen times! And he seems to care as little for his kingdom as for me. We used to talk of Castles in Spain, but I had no idea

that husbands in Spain were equally phantasmal.

Casilda. What beggar would marry an Emperor to be left so forlorn?

Queen. An hour in the morning, Casilda, when I walk in the open air and visit my sundial, is the only time the whole day long, my thoughts are truly free. And why not now, Casilda? Ladies, we shall go out.

Duchess. When the Queen deigns to go abroad the unalterable custom of the Court of Spain requires that every door should be opened by one of the grandees whose privilege and duty it is to bear the keys. Now, at this moment, there is not a grandee in the palace.

Queen. I am a prisoner, then! In short, Duchess, you wish to weary me to death.

Duchess. I am your Majesty's Duenna of the Chamber and only fulfil my duty.

Queen. Then who can blame me if I dream these dreams! No, no, I must not! Quickly, all my ladies! Come; cards, a table, and a game of lansquenet!

Duchess. Keep your seats, ladies. It is the

unalterable custom of the Court of Spain that Queens must not play cards except with Kings and princes of the blood.

Queen. Then let the princes of the blood be summoned.

Casilda. Oh, the duenna that she is!

Duchess. There are none. Your Majesty cannot have forgotten that Heaven in its inscrutable mercy has left the King without a relative in the world.

Queen. Then—then—let me have something to eat.

Casilda. That would be entertaining.

Queen. Yes, Casilda; and you shall be my guest.

Casilda. Oh, you starched old grand-aunt.

Duchess. It is the unalterable custom of the Court of Spain that when the King is absent the Queen must eat alone.

Queen. I was freer in the nursery. Not to go out, nor take a hand at cards, nor eat a morsel when I like! It is the unalterable custom of the Court of Spain that the Queen, although she is at liberty to breathe during all

hours of the day and night, is fully entitled to die of ennui whenever she chooses.

Casilda. Madam, might it not amuse you if I were to summon one of your Majesty's equerries?

Queen. Casilda!

Casilda. Oh, madam, shall we ever behold a young man again! This miserable court! I believe old age steals in by the eyes; and if we see nothing but gray hairs and wrinkles, gray hairs and wrinkles will overtake us long before they are due.

Queen. Laugh while you can, child! A time comes when the heart starts up awake; and when sleep has gone, and the dream of youth, joy goes with them.

Voice (singing). Birds of rarest note,
Cease your haunting calls:
From a sweeter throat
Richer music falls!

Queen. Casilda, my best Casilda, there are years of this in front of me! What am I to do?
. . . Listen! It is some one singing.

Voice. When her glance of gold
Kindles high desire,
All the stars untold
Hide their silver fire.

Duchess. Bid them drive that vagabond
away; his song disturbs the Queen.

Queen. No one shall be so thankless and so
rude!

The song delights me and the singer too.

Voice. Let proud Spring appear,
Staining Winter's snows:
Summer all the year
In her bosom glows!

Queen. He sings of love.

Casilda. As happy as a king!

Queen. As happy as a peasant. Hush! Again:

Voice. Song all songs above,
Looks that Heaven outshine,
Bosom breathing love—
All are mine, are mine!

Queen. I cannot hear him now. But we may
see. [*Goes towards the window.*]

Duchess. Your Majesty! Your Majesty! The

Queen of Spain cannot possibly look out of a window!

Queen. I think I shall be happier in my tomb!
Never to watch the lingering sunset strew
Ruby and opal, like a laggard tide
Reluctant to retire, that heaps with gifts
The golden strand of Heaven; nor hear again
A wandering voice proclaim the reign of love,
When evening in its cloak of darkness wraps
The passion of the world: a phantom queen
That may not look or listen, speak or think,
Devoted daily to a living death!

[*A clock strikes.*

Duchess. Ladies, it is time to withdraw.
Your Majesty cannot have forgotten that to-day
we celebrate the feast of the Holy Apostles.

Queen. But must Casilda leave me—all alone?

Duchess. It is the custom for the Queen of
Spain to practise her devotions in the strictest
privacy. [*All go out except the QUEEN.*

Queen. To practise my devotions? If I could!
Those thoughts that throng the porches of my
mind,

Impatient outcasts when the house is filled

In ways accustomed, now that solitude
And vacancy invite the random guest,
Rush headlong to the temple of my heart,
And revel in the sanctuary. . . . There!
The bleeding hand imprinted on the wall—
Love's bold sign-manual! Poor hand, brave
hand,

That tore itself for me! Here, in my breast,
Would I could treasure it and make it whole.

[*Takes from her bodice a crumpled letter,
some faded blue flowers and a blood-
stained rag of lace.*]

Oh, savage, envious spikes—and subtle too!—
That for a keepsake plucked a spray of lace
Bedewed with blood! Mine—mine now, foolish
spikes!

What? Could I treasure all these sapphire
buds

That every morning on the dial-stone
Foreshadowed love, and leave this crimson
flower,

The energy, the soul of love itself,
To wither on the dead embattled wall!
And this! . . .

[Thrusts the letter, etc., back into her bodice.]

No; it is ended now. Three days
Have passed without a sign; the dial-stone
Is innocent of news; the dream is done.
Oh, gallant one that nightly ventured life
To give the lonely Queen the flowers she loves,
May wealth and honour, victory in war,
And joy in peace attend you all your days.—
Don Salluste! What of him, my enemy?
Fate shelters and betrays! Unseen by me
An angel and a devil haunt my soul:
Darkly they work my destiny, intent
On some supreme design, when man to man
My unknown lover shall confront my foe—
And save me? Who can tell! My fortunes
drift
And beat about between opposing winds:
How impotent a queen is, how forlorn,
How poor a thing! In Heaven my comfort
lies!
Oh, God, befriend me in my loneliness! . . .
I cannot pray to God—nor pray at all
With this upon my breast, like living flame

Upon an altar! [*Lays the letter, etc., aside.*

Now! [*Kneels.*

Mother which art

In Heaven, star of the sea and shipwrecked
souls,

Sweet comforter of breaking hearts, oh thou

Whom women pray to, help me in my need! . . .

What do I need? [*Takes up letter.*

I need to read this once—

But once! Alas, I say that every day. [*Reads.*

“Let the Queen know that far beneath her feet and hidden from her in the darkness of his tragic fate there lives a man who loves her, who is wrung with anguish of his passion as if a worm were to desire a star; and who would yield his life to purchase the Queen a moment's pleasure, to save the Queen a moment's pain.”

A soul athirst must drink even though the
draught

Be poison! . . .

Oh Lady, see'st thou? It is love I need!

I would have loved the King my husband well,

Had he so willed it; but he loves me not.
And this poor treasure, *this* is all I have!
Let me keep this!

Enter an Usher.

Usher. A letter from the King.
Queen. A letter from the King! My prayer
is heard!

*Re-enter the DUCHESS, CASILDA, ladies and DON
GURITAN, followed by two pages carrying
the King's letter on a cushion of cloth of
gold.*

A miracle! I thank you lord and king.
He thinks of me, and sends a loving message.

Duchess. It is the custom for the Duenna of
the Chamber to read all letters first.

Queen. This deadly etiquette! Read, then.

Duchess. He writes from Aranjuez. [*Reads.*]

"I have determined for a time to withdraw
from the world and to resign the control of
the state into your hands. I appoint you,

madam, Queen Regent of Spain, with the rank, power and prerogative of an absolute monarch. The Privy Council have my instructions to attend you immediately. May God have you in His Holy Keeping." Signed "Charles."

Queen. Power! and I wanted love. Give me the letter. This is not the King's hand. Ah, he signs it. . . . Can two men write so much alike? My eyes deceive me? Who brought this?

Duchess. Don Cæsar de Bazan.

Queen. Don Cæsar de Bazan? Don Cæsar de Bazan.

Duchess. Count of Garofa, a new equerry whom His Majesty presents to the Queen. He is a cousin of the Marquis of Santa Cruz, and recommended by him: a very accomplished gentleman, they say.

Queen. I wish to speak with him.

Duchess. Madam, it is the unalterable custom for the Queen of Spain——

Queen. It is the unalterable custom for the

Queen Regent of Spain to order all things according to her will.

Duchess. Don Guritan, admit the equerry.

Don Guritan. He waits at the door, madam.

Queen. We shall receive him in private audience.

[*The DUCHESS and ladies go out.*

CASILDA remains.

Enter RUY BLAS.

Don Guritan. A youthful squire. My rival,
come at last. [Goes out.

Ruy Blas. Our secret haunts her eyes like
fateful light

The stars enshrine dispensing life and death.

Queen. You come from Aranjuez?

Ruy Blas. She speaks to me!

The thunder of my heart might tell my tale
To all the world.

Queen. Approach, my lord—I think . . .
This letter of the King's . . . is signed by
him.—

His eyes fathom my soul! I cannot ask

What most I wish to know. Thank you, my lord.

Who were the nobles present with the King?

Ruy Blas. Their names I cannot tell. I scarce had time

To post to Aranjuez and back: I left Madrid only three days ago.

Queen. Three days!

Casilda. The messenger is ill!

Ruy Blas. No! I am well . . .

Perhaps the sun . . . the breathless ride . . . my heart!

[As he sinks down his cloak falling back shows his left hand bandaged.]

Casilda. Sweet heaven! Oh, madam! See! his hand!

Queen. A wound!

Casilda. He faints away.

Queen. I have an essence here! . . .

[Gives CASILDA a scent bottle from her bodice, drawing out the rag of lace with it.]

It is the very lace! And this is he
Who loves me as a woman would be loved!

Ruy Blas. Upon her bosom like an amulet
She wears my blood! Now I could die content!

Casilda. How were you wounded? Is it recent? No!

Why did they send you with the King's decree?

Queen. Surely the writer of a letter makes
A choice deliverer.

Casilda. But he never said
He wrote it.

Queen. No? I was mistaken then.
My lord, you must have rest.

Ruy Blas. I need no rest.
With some men, any passion, joy or grief,
At the first onset seems as merciless
As Death itself.

Queen. And afterwards?

Ruy Blas. New power
And keener sense.

Queen. So sudden changes work.
But are you sure, my lord? Brave spirits mock
Their sufferings.

Ruy Blas. This? A wound, dearer to me
Than the most potent talisman engraved
On gold or gem.

Queen. What art transmutes a wound
Into a charm?

Ruy Blas. The alchemy of love.

Queen. Of love! . . . My lord, you bring a
mandate here
That daunts me. "Power . . . prerogative." I
doubt

Myself.

Ruy Blas. But, madam, think of Spain.

Queen. Of Spain!
There springs my inspiration. I have dreamt
Of help for Spain, and lo, the might is
mine,

Could I devise a plan and grasp the means!

Ruy Blas. A means of help for Spain? There
is one means!

Queen. One means?

Ruy Blas. To scourge away the banded
knaves
Who ruin her, pretending patriotism.
Had I an hour's authority . . .

Queen. Go on!

Ruy Blas. The fate of Spain made me for-
get myself.

Queen. And so it should. An hour's authority?

Ruy Blas. Our inmost thoughts escape sometimes.

Queen. Escape?

Do you imagine things you would not dare?

Ruy Blas. I dare attempt whatever I conceive.

Queen. An hour's authority? It shall be his!

Re-enter DON GURITAN and an Usher.

Don Guritan. The Council waits your Majesty's commands.

Queen. In good time, too! Bid them assemble here. [Usher goes out.

Don Cæsar de Bazan will take my place
And welcome them, according to their worth.
Before he meets the lords he would remove
The marks of travel. See to all his wants.—
This hour is yours. Here I, unseen, shall see

If you can conquer men and master fate,
As I desire, as my new dream foretells.

Ruy Blas. No words can thank you. The event shall speak

My gratitude, my will to serve the Queen.

Queen. And I shall know if I have squandered love,

Or hung my heart about a hero's neck.

[*Goes out.*]

Ruy Blas. In token of her love she gives me Spain

To rule! An hour? That's as the venture speeds!

Don Guritan. [*Comparing his sword with RUY BLAS's.*] I shall provide two of equal length.

Ruy Blas. I am satisfied with the one I have. Come, my lord; some water and some wine to scour the dust from my face and throat.

Don Guritan. I have always made it a point of honour to kill my rivals.

Ruy Blas. A sure way to be rid of them.

Don Guritan. In sixteen hundred and fifty I killed Captain Vasquez for looking twice at the lady I then loved. The Count of Insola in sixteen sixty-six wrote to my mistress—Angelica I remember her name was: he fell by my hand.

And I killed Don Tirso Gammonal upon suspicion in sixteen eighty.

Ruy Blas. You have three lives upon your conscience, then. But why confess to me?

Don Guritan. Because I mean to add a fourth. To-morrow the sun rises at five. So will I; so will you. Meet me behind the chapel. Your name is Cæsar. I am called Don Gaspar Guritan. Tassis y Guevarra, Count of Oñate.

Ruy Blas. Don Guritan, the time and place do not suit me. Come to me at my house to-morrow.

Don Guritan. Where is your house?

Ruy Blas. I shall tell you as we go. Now, quickly, my lord. [Goes out.

Enter the MARQUIS OF SANTA CRUZ, the MARQUIS OF BASTO, the COUNT OF ALBA, ANTONIO UBILLA, MONTAZGO, COVADENGA, and other Councillors.

Don Guritan. I have to inform you, my lords, that Her Majesty has deputed Don Cæsar de Bazan to represent her to-night.

Many voices. Don Cæsar de Bazan!

Montazgo. My good Don Guritan——

Don Guritan. That is all I know of the matter, and more than I ever wished to know.

[*Goes out.*

Ubilla. Don Cæsar de Bazan! The most notorious scapegrace of the age—as good as dead ten years ago.

Montazgo. Now I think of it, there was some word of his reformation and return to favour. Yes; Santa Cruz befriended him when Don Salluste disappeared.

Santa Cruz. But so brilliant an emergence from obscurity, from oblivion itself, suggests a more potent cause than my friendship.

Montazgo. The source of his advancement cannot long be hid; but that is no concern of ours. I have only one remark to make—it was a saying of my grandfather's: "You may bite the king's nose off, so long as you kiss the hem of the favourite's robe." Now to business.

Montazgo. Business! Sacred word!

Ubilla. Yes, like charity, it covers a multitude of sins.

Montazgo. Admirable! My peccadillo in the meantime is this. I want to buy that Alcaid's

place for my nephew. You can easily furnish the wherewithal from the fund set apart for the purchase of relics.

Ubilla. Can I? What about my cousin Melchior of Elva? The Bailiff of the Ebro died two days ago, and you promised Melchior the post.

Montazgo. So many wants! Why, we have just found a dowry for your daughter: the marriage feast is still raging. On every hand I am assailed——

Ubilla. So are we all—Heaven help us! Come, your nephew shall be Alcaid.

Montazgo. Spoken like a statesman! Your cousin shall be Bailiff.

Basto. This astounding relative of yours whom the Queen gives us for a master, of what nature is his reformation?

Santa Cruz. A very cogent question. Take the ingenuous rake: when he perceives the evil of his ways, he sets up for a man of probity and becomes in the end a miser. As for the crafty rake, it is the first twinge of gout that begins his conversion; and he seeks salva-

tion in the arms of the state, reconciling the ministry of pleasure with the service of his country! I believe he is very well represented at this board.

Basto. That is to say the ingenuous rake reforms because he wishes to stand well with himself, and the crafty rake reforms because he wishes to stand well with the world.

Santa Cruz. Admirably distinguished, my lord. Now, my cousin Don Cæsar is still quite a young man; I therefore conclude that his reformation has been sudden, salient and complete.

Alba. Do you mean that he will attempt to introduce the ordinary methods of common honesty into affairs of state?

Santa Cruz. My dear count, how can I tell what he will do. He may be a mere catspaw of the King's.

Basto. Or a toy of the Queen's.

Santa Cruz. Besides, his reformation is only a rumour, and may be a ruse. In all likelihood he comes hither to fill his own pockets.

Alba. I hope so. We could never tolerate

any departure from the true principles of a wise policy.

Santa Cruz. Pronounced with your usual profound insight.

Covadenga. But—but—but——

Santa Cruz. But what has Covadenga to say?

Enter RUY BLAS unseen by the others.

Covadenga. But some have far too much, and others not half enough. Ubilla farms the whole tobacco duty; Don Fernando has the indigo and musk; Don Pedro handles the taxes of eight thousand citizens, and draws besides the dues on salt, and five per cent. on gold, on jet, on amber——

Montazgo. And you, Covadenga, you yourself——

Covadenga. No, you! you, Montazgo, you have limed the twigs! Taxes on arsenic, on snow, on playing cards, on brass; fines to shun the bastinado; shipping dues, ocean tithes, and tithes on lead and rosewood; all these pour into

your coffers, while mine are as empty as an echo. Decree me something, lords, or, by Heaven, I'll raise a storm shall shake you from your nests!

Santa Cruz. The ancient raven! Why, he touches more in a day than any two of us in a week. Except the Indies, he squeezes the islands of both seas. His pinions span a hemisphere: in one claw he holds Majorca; the other grips the Peak of Teneriffe.

Covadenga. I tell you I have nothing.

Alba. Nothing? He holds the slave trade in his pocket!

Montazgo. I wish I had complained long ago! I ought to have the forests!

Covadenga. I'll give you my slaves for your tithes to-morrow!

Ruy Blas. I wish you joy, my lords! Your native land—

The virtue of her word, her arm of might,
Her majesty and greatness that excelled
The high achievement of Imperial Rome—
Lies by the wayside dying; while her sons,
You, lords and lawyers, gallant vermin, swarm,

And prey upon her. Were there glance or
word

Of pointed flame to pierce you; hint or dread
Of patient justice and unfailing doom

To fright you from your quarry; any drop
Of charity, compassion, mercy, grace,

Left half-congealed about your frozen hearts,
To melt into a moment of remorse.

Then would I tell of Brisach, Steinfort, Comte,
Rousillon, Ormuz, Goa, blood-bought gems

Of Europe and the Orient, from her crown
Like withered petals shed; of islands, realms,

Discovered continents, filched while we slept;
Of vanquished arms, of fleets and oceans lost;

While tax and tithe, the statesman's alchemy,
Perverted to transmute the blood of men,

The tears of women and the hungry cries
Of children into gold, provide the cost

Of changing luxury and studied vice.

This would I tell you; but you know it all,
And think it right and just—the only means

To govern Spain.—Integrity itself

Might blush before such faithful ministers!

Industrious bees—that harry their own hives!

Belov'd physicians of a bedrid land—
Who hack and disembowel as if they held
A pulseless corpse beneath their eager blades!
The builders of a nation's history—
Who dig her grave, carousing; cast her in
Unburied, pillaged of her very shroud,
And naked left for dogs to strip her bones!

Covadenga. You are Don Cæsar de Bazan,
my lord.

Ruy Blas. The servant of the Queen.

Covadenga. [*Having spoken with MONTAZZO.*]

We understand,

My lord, we both resign our offices.

Ruy Blas. What was your office? . . . Answer me, my lord!

Covadenga. I am the Secretary of the Isles.

Ruy Blas. You mean, you were.—And you, what place was yours?

Montazzo. I was the Secretary of the Indies.

Ruy Blas. You will retire to Andalusia;
You, to Castile at once. [*The pair go out.*]

And all of you

Who fear to face the ruin you have wrought
Must leave the Capital. If any dare

Withstand the insurgent evil in themselves,
Let them return to me within the hour.
Consider well, my lords; make up your minds.
[*All go out, leaving RUY BLAS alone.*

Re-enter the QUEEN.

Queen. Oh, thanks, and thanks again! I saw
and heard
The lightning of your eye, your voice of
power.
Like a destroying angel on their heads
You poured the certain terror of the truth!
Whence comes this strength, so regal, so
divine?
Ruy Blas. Out of my love for you. The
overthrow
Of Spain which those unhallowed Councillors
Blindly prepare, involves your piteous ruin;
And I would save the world to save your
heart
One throb of pain, one moment of dismay.

Queen. Is this not madness?

Ruy Blas.

No, I am not mad,

Although I tremble thus; it is the fire
And urgent inspiration of my love
That melts and makes my being o'er again,
A new created soul.

Queen. My hungry heart!

Ruy Blas. Your eyes are like the day to one
immured

A lifetime in a dungeon, and your voice
Like music of the resurrection-morn,
That opes the gates of death with melody.

Queen. And not for us alone does time begin
A radiant passage. Heaven entrusts to you
The safety of the state; and I obey
Its clear command in yielding you all power.
The honour of the Empire and your own—
And mine, you will preserve inviolate.

Ruy Blas. The honour of the state shall be
more dear

Than life, than love. The honour of the
Queen?

I could tear up my body with my hands
To hide you in my heart did evil threat;
And I shall guard my dreams from harming
you.

And faithfully as Time his vigil keeps.

Queen. Oh you were sent to save me from
despair;

To be my help, my friend.

Ruy Blas. To be your friend!

Queen. My dearest friend. . . . And now
good night.

Ruy Blas. Not yet!

There are a million things to say, to hear!
The past that teemed with prophecies of this,
The wonder of the present, and the hope
That makes the time to come a constant dawn,
Demand long utterance now, and countless
lives

With sweet renewal of companionship.

Queen. I trust you. Queen to all the world,
to you

I am, what every queen desires to be
To one true heart, a woman. Dream of me
In happy hours; in sorrow, in distress
Come to me always and be comforted;
In danger send for me, and by your side
I live or die.

Ruy Blas. You will not leave me yet?

Queen. I must not stay.

Ruy Blas. When shall we meet again?

Queen. To-morrow.

Ruy Blas. And our meeting shall be—
where?

Queen. Beside the sundial.

[*Takes the flowers from her bodice.*

Come, instead of these.

My soul is in this kiss. Good-night.

[*Goes out.*

Ruy Blas. Good-night.

Enter DON SALLUSTE, dressed as a lackey.

Don Salluste. Good-night!

Ruy Blas. Don Salluste!

Don Salluste. The last person you wished to
see.

Ruy Blas. Or expected to see, my lord. But
you were always foolhardy.

Don Salluste. What?

Ruy Blas. Your voice may be recognized if
you speak so loud. The meaning of this quaint
attire?

Don Salluste. Ah! you amuse yourself. I wished to enter the palace, and this livery admits me everywhere. I rather like it.

Ruy Blas. I daresay a livery becomes you better than it did me, my lord; and having admitted you to the palace, let it now be your safe conduct home again.

Don Salluste. The air is chilly. Be good enough to close the window.

Ruy Blas. Because if you are found here, a banished man, your life may be the forfeit.

Don Salluste. My life must take care of itself; but my health I mean to keep, and there you can assist me. The window.

Ruy Blas. As for me, I have no desire to harm you; but I cannot suffer so false a friend of Spain to remain longer under the Queen's roof. Will you go, or shall I summon the guard?

Don Salluste. This is very tedious. Buffoonery, even when time and place accord, is never to my taste. I move towards a goal known only to myself; for you, the end is happiness beyond your most daring hope. Be tranquil, and obey.

Ruy Blas. I obey no one but the Queen, who has placed in my hands the destiny of Spain.

Don Salluste. I heard some prattle of that as I traversed the courtyard. My handkerchief, Ruy Blas.

[DON SALLUSTE *had dropped his handkerchief on entering.*

Ruy Blas. I see it.—One thing I will tell you, Don Salluste——

Don Salluste. Very well acted—for a lackey. Now, I want your attention.

Ruy Blas. I warned you, my lord.

Don Salluste. What will you do?

Ruy Blas. Imprison you at once.

Don Salluste. Then I shall say who you are.

Ruy Blas. But, my lord——

Don Salluste. I am a party to your imposture? Of course I risk both our heads. We are only entering the wood, Ruy Blas.

Ruy Blas. I shall deny it all.

Don Salluste. Pooh! Childish!

Ruy Blas. You have no proof.

Don Salluste. And you no memory.

Ruy Blas. My signature! A felon's crime
confessed

Before performance! And it was my soul
I bartered for a vision of the Queen.
Yet fate directs my fault to noble ends,
And pardons me for Spain's deliverance.—
I'll have that devil's document.

Don Salluste. Search, then!—

You fool! That devil's document is safe
In Gudiel's faithful keeping, to be used
Upon my death against you.—As you say,
Your soul is mine. You entertain me much—
As if my glove were to arise in wrath
And battle with my hand.—My handkerchief,
[RUY BLAS gives DON SALLUSTE his
handkerchief.]

To-morrow you will remain in my house all
morning until I come. None must be in at-
tendance except the mutes. You will purchase
a coach and horses; have them equipped for a
journey, and waiting in the garden well-hidden
from passers-by. I shall arrange relays. The
money you require will be brought you.

Ruy Blas. Does this affect the Queen?

Don Salluste. What maggot now?

Ruy Blas. You thrust me towards a precipice;
your hand

Upon my throat; and I am bound and blind.
You cannot know the monstrous wrong you do:
I loved the Queen before you bade me love her.

Don Salluste. I knew it.

Ruy Blas. Knew it?

Don Salluste. What can that signify?

Ruy Blas. This hellish torture is your pastime, then?

Don Salluste. Enough of heroism! I made
you great

For my own ends; your wooing of the Queen
Is part and parcel of your service due—
Just as you'd mount and ride behind my coach.

Ruy Blas. You build a hideous engine secretly,
With wheels and levers, blades and mallets
armed.

At ease essaying its efficiency,
You feed it with a thing the tailor made,
A livery: at your touch, the engine moves—
Whirr, slash and pounding blow; and as you
watch,

Emerging from its iron blandishments,
Ensanguined rags, an oozing battered head,
A lacerated heart all smoking hot,
You mark with steady eye and temperate pulse
That this convenient livery had indued
A human being. You have time to stay
The murderous wheels before they drag the
Queen

Among the dripping knives and strokes of
death;

For I divine your fell machinery works
To swallow up her noble innocence.

You called me faithful servant. Master, see—
How I submit! Have mercy on the Queen!

Don Salluste. Oh! Unintelligent! You weary
me!

Ruy Blas. Have mercy on the Queen?

Don Salluste. Rise, Ruy Blas.—

Hum! Close that window.

[*RUY BLAS closes the window.*

Now sir, understand:

If you fulfil not to the very letter
The charge I gave you; if by whisper, look,
Or gesture you betray me; first, for her:—

In every public haunt where men resort
On business bent or pleasure, she shall be
Remorselessly defamed, and held to scorn,
A ruined woman, ruined wife and Queen.
And as for you: a certain document,
Securely kept, shall reach your mistress' hands,
Adding to her perdition, self-contempt,
And death in restless agony of soul;
For she shall read a writing of more power
To eat her spirit out than venom drawn
From deadliest fangs—

“I, Ruy Blas, lackey to his Excellency, Don Salluste de Bazan, engage to fulfil all his commands without question while life and liberty are mine.”

Ruy Blas. I will obey you.

Don Salluste. The Councillors return.

Don Cæsar de Bazan, your humble servant.

[*Goes out.*

Ruy Blas. If ever fate implacably decreed
A man's destruction and eternal death,
That man am I, and that lost soul is mine!

*Re-enter the Councillors with the exception of
COVADENGA and MONTAZZO.*

Ubilla. My lord, we have determined to support
port

Your policy, and come to know your will.

We hail in you Spain's saviour. Greet him,
lords!

All. Don Cæsar de Bazan, saviour of Spain!

Ruy Blas. Saviour of Spain? Alas for Spain
—and me!

You have the right way of it! Cunning, fraud,
Relentless perfidy, rapacious greed,
Ferocity, craft, rancour, outrage, lust—
These triumph everywhere, so let them win!
Cut up the sceptre and sell it by the inch;
Hold continents to auction; melt the crown;
And the imperial eagle whose wide wings
Sheltered the nations?—Pluck it, patriots;
Quick to the stew-pan; let it simmer there,
Some dainty palates crave luxurious fare.
In brimming beakers pledge the reign of
death;

Call for a bumper with your latest breath
To welcome and outcrow the crack of doom;
And say, should souls new-risen from the tomb
Inquire how this strange end of all began,
" 'Twas and 'twas not Don Cæsar de Bazan."

ACT III.

SCENE.—*A sombre room in DON SALLUSTE'S secret lodging, with a smaller room behind. There is a secret entrance on the right.*

Enter RUY BLAS carrying a bunch of blue flowers.

Ruy Blas. “Beside the sundial. Come—instead of these.”

And only these to greet her. . . .

The journey through the night; the nutbrown
brook

That whispered to the moon; the storm of
sobs

And thunder-shower of tears; the embattled
wall;

The dial-stone—the altar of our hearts;

The stretched endeavour and the coursing
thought

Consumed my passion, set my spirit free
That madness grappled for. [*To the flowers.*

But was it well

To bid your sweet companions once again
Fulfil their silent embassy of love?

Whilst here I gnaw the remnant of my soul,
She issues from her palace like the sun
Breaking the golden doors of morning. Quick
She scans her fair green world, searching for
me;

A moment halts, dismayed. Oh yet, she thinks,
She knows, I must be there! She lifts her
skirt

And runs: and only these instead of him
Who seemed to her divine! Oh God! Oh
God!

Tears! And I fancied I had shed them all.
Still—still my flowers have saved her from de-
spair!

But how to thwart her enemy? To keep
Her honour as untarnished as her soul,
That in her fragrant sacred body dwells
Immaculate, like dew within a rose,
Could I not pour my blood out drop by drop,

Be hacked in bits, or pay away my life
In any subtlest agony ill minds
Prefigure, on their death-beds conscience-
struck?

Yes; but to lie blindfolded, gagged and bound,
Afraid to writhe a muscle, lest the net
Entangling us immesh us more and more,
By this arch-villain cast invisibly,
Is terror, triple torture, death-in-life!
I am his instrument; he counts on me:
Without me he is powerless. Is it so?
I see my grave, then, opening at my feet!
If that's the way?—I cannot think or guess,
Imagine, dream, divine what course he takes!
My death, by my own hand foreseen by him,
May be the very crisis, hinge and key
Of his unsearchable device.—Too wide
And far, I aim. Always some simple thing
There is to do, could it be hit upon.—
I should have sent a message with the flowers!
Oh, hasty fool! But this may serve her yet!
Don Guritan, the Queen's quixotic squire!

[Writes.

Go to Her Majesty without delay. Warn

her that as she values life and honour, she must not once quit the palace—not once during the next three days. Our difference stands aside in the meantime. Watch over the Queen. I adjure you by the love you bear her.

At RUY BLAS's summons two black Mutes enter.

To the palace. Let the porter see the name,
But give this only to Don Guritan—
The Major-domo with the ribboned shoes.
I go into the city. Whoever comes,
Master or man, admit him. [*The Mutes go out.*

I, away;

Don Guritan on guard, and the Queen warned;
My master's plot is paralysed.—So, now,
Perhaps to take my last look at the world.

[*Goes out.*

Enter DON CÆSAR DE BAZAN by the chimney.

Don Cæsar. Fair and softly, as lawyers go to Heaven! Well, God must have some use for a man who tumbles down a chimney and breaks

no bones.—Your pardon, gentlemen. Give yourselves no trouble on my account. Continue the conversation. True, I entered without knocking; but that . . . Ha! Nobody? I'd swear upon a book I heard voices. Ghosts, doubtless; condemned duennas and spectral serving-men. [*Sits in an arm chair.*] Comfort itself. Now, let me think. First let me curse my cousin:—Don Salluste de Bazan, you are a mystery of iniquity; and I assign you to poverty, disease and ignominy for the life which now is, and to the deepest soundings hitherto recorded in the bottomless pit for that which is to come. That will do till I excogitate an elaborate vengeance. How did I escape, cousin? You forget my good friend Matalobos. He dogged your Alguazils; cut me out, and brought me safely to Madrid. Why am I here? I tired of lying *perdu*, and came abroad to take the air. Pounce! Your Alguazils are at my heels. I leap a wall; I climb a tree; I reach a roof; and enter upon a new chapter by this commodious flue at the expense of a ruined cloak, a torn doublet, and an abraided leg. [*Pulls out a drawer in a ward-*

robe and finds a cloak and a sword.] Umph! This velvet may have seen adventures; but it never explored a chimney, I'll be bound,—Good steel; but every man knows his own blade best. [*Puts on the cloak and returns the sword to the drawer.*] What did I say? I think so, [*Takes off his old shoes and replaces them with a pair of handsome half-boots.*] An unfair exchange? Not a bit! I see no reason for complaint.—Somewhat unwholesome and mysterious. Not a soul to be seen. Where the deuce have I got to? Curtained; shuttered; lamps by daylight! [*Examines the smaller room.*] An empty cabinet and no way out. You have to be poured into this place like wine into a bottle.—Wine; yes. Now, I should say that was a bookcase. [*Opens a cupboard and finds a well-furnished larder.*] So! my literary instinct did not deceive me! A choice library! My prejudice against this house begins to waver before such proofs of culture and refinement. [*Sets out a pie, a watermelon, flagons of wine, dishes, glass, plate, knife and fork, etc.*] Let me sample this poem first. [*Takes wine.*] A very excellent work from one of the most famous

presses in the world, Jerez de los Caballeros; a mature production of that great poet, the sun. What erudite volume have we here? [*Cuts into the pie.*] Some eclectic anthology or rich miscellany. The critical acumen of the purveyor of this nutritious collectanea, the profound penetration of his mind, his finished faculty of nice discrimination . . . judicious reticence in the seasoning . . . gastronomical philosophy . . . work of true genius. . . . If the librarian should return! [*Sets another plate and glass, etc.*] He may wish to share my studies. I expect he is a very charming fellow. Books and pretty women perhaps. Why here he comes!

Enter a Lackey bearing a large courier's bag.

Ah! more books. Let me help you. I have just been reading in your library here. I compliment you, Sir, upon your taste in literature, and this [*pointing to the empty pie-dish*] demonstrates my own appreciation.—The servant! Ah—your master and I are good friends. We have never met to my knowledge, but we

have the same extraordinary power of perceiving and relishing excellence in human performances.

Lackey. Is his honour Don Cæsar de Bazan?

Don Cæsar. His honour is Don Cæsar de Bazan, he and none other.—A new adventure and one of the strangest.

Lackey. Will his honour see if the amount is right?

Don Cæsar. Money!—My man——

Lackey. I must ask his honour to count it himself. It is the sum you were to get, you know.

Don Cæsar. Oh, I see!—I mustn't mismanage this.—I'll give you a receipt.

Lackey. There are no instructions about a receipt.

Don Cæsar. That's as it should be. Set it there.—Now, who sends this?

Lackey. His honour knows well enough.

Don Cæsar. Of course; but I must make certain there is no mistake. Now?

Lackey. This money comes from you know who for you know what.

Don Cæsar. Exactly.

Lackey. We've got to be very careful, you and me. Sssh!

Don Cæsar. Sssh!

Lackey. The money——

Don Cæsar. Comes from I know who for I know what. Nothing could be plainer.

Lackey. We must——

Don Cæsar. You and I. I know.

Lackey. Sssh! His honour must be careful. Not a word to me. His honour cannot have forgotten that I am to know neither who nor what; I only obey.

Don Cæsar. I remember. Yes.

Lackey. His honour understands what is intended, and that's enough for me.

Don Cæsar. And for me. I shall take charge of this money. Nothing, my good fellow, is easier than to take charge of money.

Lackey. Sssh! Sssh!

Don Cæsar. Quite right. I was about to be indiscreet.

Lackey. His honour must count it.

Don Cæsar. Far too much trouble! [*Slapping the bag.*] What a portly paunch.

Lackey. The gold is in four-pistole pieces, seven drachms, thirty-six grains each; and broad doubloons full weight by the mark. The silver is in cross-Marys.

Don Cæsar. [*Emptying the bag and filling his pockets.*] These tailors know nothing about their business. Doublets should be honey-combed with pockets; breeches—rabbit-warrens; and cloaks, pouched and walleted inside and out.

Lackey. I am to do what you tell me.

Don Cæsar. You are.

Lackey. You are to tell me a very consequential thing which I am to help you to execute without delay.

Don Cæsar. It is a matter of the greatest public import, and what is infinitely more to the point, of superlative private significance.

Lackey. Which should be undertaken at once. I am only saying what I was told to say.

Don Cæsar. And I like you for it. Faithful servant!

Lackey. My master said we were to do it at once.

Don Cæsar. And so we shall.—Here's a chance for brains.—First to put you in the right mood, drink that. [*Pours out wine.*

Lackey. Heh! heh! my lord!

Don Cæsar. Drink. [*Plies the Lackey with wine.*] Now let us discuss this business. To begin with, there are some things I must inform you of. Man, you are to understand, is merely so much caliginous smoke, issuing from the furnace of the passions and characterized by a tendency to mount into the blue. Your human smoke, moreover, like that of other fires, pulls in its horns, so to speak, when there's trouble in the wind, and instead of ascending is apt to come down the chimney to save its skin. You follow me? Good, let us drink. All the doubloons in the world are not worth the halting song of a happy drunkard. But be prudent; raise no more devils than you can lay again.—Fasten this clasp for me; I can't get it right.

Lackey. Take note that I am not your honour's valet. [*Rings a hand-bell.*

Don Cæsar. Damn!—Brains can lubricate a

man out of a tight place; but if the master of the house comes, I'm caught.

Enter a black Mute.

Lackey. Fasten the clasp of his honour's cloak.

[The Mute does so and goes out.]

Don Cæsar. If this is not Beelzebub's back parlour, I've left my wits in the chimney! *[Leaves the Lackey and paces the room.]* I am at home here, it seems. In Heaven's name and the devil's, then, let the world bump on, I'll take the ball on the hop! Haven't I enough to pay my creditors? A little on account to keep them sweet? Pah! Why should I water such ill-smelling weeds? Pho! how could I dream of so servile an abuse! Was there ever any drug or philtre able to stimulate all the meanness in humanity like a little found money! Pay my creditors? No! There my honour is touched. There I think what the world would say. Pay! Don Cæsar pay! Huh!

Lackey. [Very drunk.] Now, my lord, I am quite at your service.

Don Cæsar. Sssh! I am thrashing the matter out. Go on drinking.—I have determined on your share in the conduct of this business.—Fill your pockets. [*Assists the Lackey to fill his pockets.*] You know the lane leading out of the Grand Square?

Lackey. Like the way to my mouth.

Don Cæsar. Faith, you've learned that to-day, if you never knew it before.—In number nine, should you get upstairs alive, you will find Lucinda. She wears a twopenny-ha'penny bonnet; and her hair is thick, dusty, matted, and impregnable to the assault of any comb; a blonde, with a ruddy countenance and eyes of the colour of indigo; rather short and stout, but light on her feet—she once danced a fandango before the Pope. Very well. Present her with a hundred ducats in my name. In the next house lives a cheerful old toper of my acquaintance; give him six pistoles; no more; six. Across the way in a tavern about the size of an oven, and as dark, my beloved Goulatromba wastes the shining hours daily; a man after my own heart, silent, of the sweetest

temper, and utterly irrational; give him thirty crowns.

Lackey. And then?

Don Cæsar. Keep the rest. Crack the bottles; toss the pots; riot to your heart's content; and take care you don't go home till the last maravedi clinks in the tavern-keeper's till.

Lackey. I know neither who nor what. I only obey. [Reels out.

Don Cæsar. Fabulously drunk.—Still it is the duty of a wise man and a Christian to make a good use of his money while he has it. This supply should last me for a week handsomely, and if anything remains I can employ it in endowing churches.

Enter a Duenna.

Duenna. Don Cæsar de Bazan?

Don Cæsar. At home.—Female this time. Beyond a doubt, the devil or Don Salluste is mixed in this.—Yes, madam; I am Don Cæsar de Bazan. What is your business with me?—

The old jackal; courier in advance doubtless of some gay young lioness.

Duenna. My lord, I salute you in the name of all the saints.

Don Cæsar. Amen.—Pietism—the thin end of the wedge of wantonness.

Duenna. Heaven preserve your lordship! Is it you who gave somebody a secret rendezvous for to-day?

Don Cæsar. I am not incapable of such a thing.

Duenna. A choice reply; I love discretion. It was you, then, who sent this message to—the fair one who shall be nameless.

[*Produces a letter.*]

Don Cæsar. Very like what I would do.

Duenna. Discreet again; the lady, I understand, requires to be specially careful. I do not know her; her waiting-maid employed me, and my simple duty is to have the letter confirmed.

Don Cæsar. I confirm every word of it.

Duenna. Then the letter must be endorsed
“Come.”

Don Cæsar. With all the pleasure in life.

[*Endorses the letter.*]

Duenna. You will see her to-day. Is she pretty—eh?

Don Cæsar. Exquisite.

Duenna. I thought so; for the waiting-maid had the sweetest face and the wickedest eye I ever beheld; and no young madam keeps a servant handsomer than herself.—Well, my lord, I wish you joy.

Don Cæsar. [*Filling her hand with doubloons.*] Your glove, madam.

Duenna. Ah! I had mislaid it. Should you ever require my services, I am dame Oliva, to be found daily at the Convent of Saint Isidro. I sit by the third pillar on the right as you enter the church.—You will see her to-day, my lord. Remember me in your prayers. [*Goes out.*]

Don Cæsar. Nothing that can happen now shall astonish me. Witches may visit limbo on enchanted broomsticks; but the true way to the moon is down the first chimney you come to; there you find a repast prepared, and immediately the inhabitants of the planet, these

gentle lunatics, furnish you unsolicited with ample pocket-money, and announce a beautiful, passionate and enterprising mistress.

Enter DON GURITAN with two long swords under his arm.

While to complete the entertainment enter a punctilious duellist. Lunar or mundane, what more can a man desire! This, doubtless, is the husband of the nameless one.

Don Guritan. Does Don Cæsar de Bazan live here?

Don Cæsar. He does. My dear lord, you are welcome in the highest degree. Positive, money; comparative, love; superlative, war.

Don Guritan. He sent a dumb negro—whom I have imprisoned—with a magpie letter about the Queen—which I tore up. He cannot throw dust in my eyes. He must die by my hand. Is he within?

Don Cæsar. Is who within?

Don Guritan. Don Cæsar de Bazan.

Don Cæsar. I am Don Cæsar de Bazan.

Don Guritan. You! Do you jest with me, sir?

Don Cæsar. I jest with all men, for I am Don Cæsar de Bazan.

Don Guritan. Again!

Don Cæsar. Again? Always Don Cæsar. But though I jest with all men I permit no man to jest with me.

Don Guritan. If you think this is droll, sir, you labour under a mistake.

Don Cæsar. You, on the contrary, are an unlimited delight, the very monument of a jealous husband—labouring under no mistake, for I expect your wife every moment.

Don Guritan. My wife?

Don Cæsar. None other, sir.

Don Guritan. But I am not married.

Don Cæsar. Not married! Name of Don Quixote, then, what do you come quarrelling here for in so infinitely ridiculous a manner?

Don Guritan. Do you know that you begin to exasperate me?

Don Cæsar. Never?

Don Guritan. You are impertinent, sir.

Don Cæsar. That actually occurs to you.

Don Guritan. You shall pay for this.

Don Cæsar. A very becoming fashion! Formerly ribbons were a part of the head-dress; but now we stick our bonnets on our boots.

Don Guritan. I see that we shall have to fight.

Don Cæsar. You think so.

Don Guritan. You are not Don Cæsar; but that is my affair. I shall begin with you.

Don Cæsar. Good. And I counsel you to finish with me too.

Don Guritan. Coxcomb! Quickly!

Don Cæsar. At once! I never permit a good duel to slip through my fingers.

Don Guritan. Where?

Don Cæsar. Behind the house. The street's deserted.

Don Guritan. For Don Cæsar, I'll kill him afterwards.

Don Cæsar. You will.

Don Guritan. Certainly.

Don Cæsar. Umph! Once one of us two is dead, I defy you to kill Don Cæsar. [*They go out.*]

Enter DON SALLUSTE by the concealed door.

Don Salluste. Nothing prepared! What's this?—Footsteps! Ruy Blas, Ruy Blas!—It is impossible that he should deceive me.—If I have dropped a stitch, and all become entangled! Some busybody may hazard a guess and alarm the Queen. The web is more delicate than gossamer; and before I catch my moth a wandering bluebottle may dash through unwittingly and ruin everything. What an ill-contrived world it is, where chance and confusion are permitted to thwart the most perfect subtlety!

Re-enter DON CÆSAR. He throws his sword on a chair.

Don Cæsar. I knew it could be no one less diabolical.

Don Salluste. Don Cæsar!

Don Cæsar. You took in hand to ply Fate's own shuttle—hey, old weaver! But I've burst through your loom with a vengeance. Your

warp and woof are flying down the wind, and the whole frame smashed to firewood. Your man with the money-bags "from you know who for you know what"——

Don Salluste. What have you done with my money?

Don Cæsar. Why, some of it I have here; you will surely give me credit for that! With the rest your drunken messenger is reeling about Madrid making presents to some disreputable friends of mine. As regards the lady——

Don Salluste. Well!

Don Cæsar. She sent an old duenna—one of your unwomanly go-betweens with a blossoming nose and a beard coming—to inquire discreetly if I expected an enamoured visitor to-day.

Don Salluste. And you said?

Don Cæsar. I said I did—like any honest bachelor or man.

Don Salluste. There is hope yet.

Don Cæsar. As for your fire-eater——

Don Salluste. Fire-eater?

Don Cæsar. He called himself Don Guritan; a kind of madman; but a lover of the duello.

Don Salluste. What can this mean? Where is Don Guritan?

Don Cæsar. In heaven—where all good swordsmen go.

Don Salluste. You killed him?

Don Cæsar. I ran him through the heart. He lies out there behind the wall almost as stiff in death as in life.

Don Salluste. This foolish buzzing drone has hardly hurt my web. Now to get rid of him. —A strange tale. Have you seen no one else?

Don Cæsar. Not yet; but I expect the lady immediately. Oh, I shall make such a royal scandal, cousin!

Don Salluste. As you please. The money you may keep; but you must leave my house.

Don Cæsar. Yes, to be dogged by your spies, knocked on the head, trussed up like a carcase and sold in the slave-market at half price.

Don Salluste. Now, you talk nonsense.

Don Cæsar. Call it so. I choose to stay. You keep here imprisoned some unfortunate

thrall of your ambition or your lust. Don Cæsar to the rescue!

Don Salluste. You braying ass! There's no one here.

Don Cæsar. You are clever enough, cousin; but I'm a genius. Talent can do much; this way and that it sweeps the board, but genius has more moves than all the chess-men together. I like the adventure. I shall stay and win.

Don Salluste. Now, if you have done, listen to me.

Don Cæsar. While your man-stealers lurk in doorways, and you fabricate false Don Cæsars! By Heaven! When I guess how my name has been taken in vain—the blasphemy!

Don Salluste. The merest chance!

Don Cæsar. Chance. I don't drink the dish-clout a second time, though you spice the wine ever so. I'll undo all your villainy and save your pining victims. From the housetop I shall call my name. [*At the window.*] Who goes there?—Alguazils in the very nick of time. Hulloo!

Enter an Alcaid followed by Alguazils.

Set it down in your warrant, sir——

Don Salluste. That this is the famous robber, Matalobos.

Don Cæsar. What?

Don Salluste. This wretch dares to invade our houses in broad day. Seize him.

Don Cæsar. Unholy liar! You——

Alcaid. Who called us?

Don Salluste. I did.

Don Cæsar. Intolerable——

Alcaid. I take my instructions from you, Sir.

Don Cæsar. But I am Don Cæsar de Bazan—I, look you!

Don Salluste. Don Cæsar?—Have the goodness to examine the cloak he wears—the collar. What name?

Alcaid. Salluste, sir.

Don Salluste. It is my cloak which he has just stolen. The doublet——

Don Cæsar. Damn you! damn you!

Don Salluste. —was also stolen. See; the escutcheon of the Count of Alba.

Alcaid. It is so, sir.

[*The Alguazils seize DON CÆSAR.*
In the struggle money rolls from
his pockets.

Don Salluste. Observe. Do honest men carry money about in that fashion?

Alcaid. No, indeed, your honour.

Enter an Alguazil.

Alguazil. A man has just been killed outside.

Don Salluste. There stands the murderer, and the weapon there.

Alcaid. [*Examining the sword.*] Blood.— Carry this carefully. Guard your prisoner. March!

Don Salluste. Good-bye, Matalobos! The great genius with more moves than all the chess-men together!

Don Cæsar. You inconceivable coward and liar! I am Don Cæsar de Bazan! I tell you, I am Don Cæsar de Bazan!

[*All go out; DON SALLUSTE by the*
concealed door.

*Re-enter RUY BLAS, with a vial which he places
on the table.*

Ruy Blas. It must be by my death.—Don
Salluste eats

His morning meal, sauced with chagrin, and
goes!

What is he doing now?—I'll think no more!

Oh that some unseen hand might intervene! . . .

The powers of evil heard me for myself!

Sweet powers of righteousness that make for
good,

Hear me entreat for her and grant my prayer!

Protect your handiwork,—blood, brain and
soul

As sweet as violets, as crystal clear,

And holy as you made her, powers of good!

It cannot be a creature so divine

Appeared upon the earth merely to die

Unhappily, with all her life unlivd,

The victim of insensate calumny,

Unheard-of vengeance and remorseless wrong;

For that would be for you, the powers of good,

To overturn the order of the world



And crown and sanction stark iniquity.
To the dread powers of wrong I sacrifice
The life I owe, and stave their malice off.
Some one must die when good and evil clash
In fateful strife; I offer up myself:
It must be by my death! How could I live
Belov'd by her and slave to him, her foe,
At any instant to be made the means
Of her destruction by inhuman craft?
You cannot, dare not bid me live, sweet powers
Of righteousness; but, oh, protect the Queen.—
Here shall I die, and he shall find me here—
The soulless livery that he took me for.
Before the sad tribunal of my heart
I have arraigned myself, most innocent—
Except of love, lofty ambition, pride,
And power to stake my soul; and have pronounced
A just decree of death lest I should prove
In wicked hands an instrument of ill:
And though my courage falters, and the sweat
Chills all my quaking flesh, yet I can die
Not madly, but serenely, for her kiss
Is on my brow, and whatsoever fate

Betide hereafter, I shall see her eyes
Looking eternal love.

Enter the QUEEN.

What! Am I dead
Already, then? . . . Ah, taken in the toils,
Unhappiest Queen!

Queen. What terror shakes your soul?

Ruy Blas. Who bade you come?

Queen. You did, Don Cæsar.

Ruy Blas. I?

Queen. Yes; have I not received—

Ruy Blas. Oh, quickly, Queen!

Queen. Your letter?

Ruy Blas. Mine?

Queen. Yours; written by your hand.

Ruy Blas. I never wrote you.

Queen. But you did, my lord.

Ruy Blas. No letter. Flowers—

Queen. I had them. Then came this.

[*Gives RUY BLAS a letter.*]

Ruy Blas. [*Reading.*] “A terrible danger be-
sets me. You, my Queen, you alone can deliver

me. . . ." That letter! How had I forgotten that?

Queen. [*Reading.*] "Come to my house at once. Come, or I am lost."

Ruy Blas. But how could I remember? How conceive

Such scornful, damned, deep-sunken treachery?

Queen. "The bearer will conduct you."—I am here.

Ruy Blas. Out! out!

Queen. I go!—How cruel men can be! What have I done?

Ruy Blas. Done! Done enough to lose Your crown, to break your heart, to drive you mad!

Queen. But how?

Ruy Blas. I cannot tell you. Out! away!

Queen. My love inspires me to divine your thoughts!

Some terrible calamity is near:

You wrote me: you regret the letter now,
And urge me hence to save me. But I stay
And share your danger.

Ruy Blas. God in Heaven!

Queen. You wish
Me gone?

Ruy Blas. If you would understand!

Queen. I do.
You wrote in haste, and then—

Ruy Blas. I never wrote!
The danger lies in me! You lure yourself,
Brave heart, straight to the snare. About you
Hell

On all sides opens! Will you not believe?
You know I love you: I would pluck my heart
Out of my breast to be your stepping-stone,
And save your shoe from any speck of mire.
And by that love I bid you go!

Queen. Don Cæsar—

Ruy Blas. Out! out of this! My fear! who
let you in?

Queen. A masked attendant shadowed by the
wall.

Ruy Blas. Masked? And his height? You
thought you knew him? No!
Who could this be?

Re-enter DON SALLUSTE.

Don Salluste. 'Twas I!

Ruy Blas. The end has come.

Queen. Don Salluste!

Don Salluste. Madam is no longer queen.

Queen. No longer. . . .

Don Salluste. You and he are mated now
For evermore.

Queen. Oh Heaven! A snare indeed!
Don Cæsar——

Don Salluste. Caught, my lady! But I mean
To speak without offence; for all my wrath
Is swamped in satisfaction. You are found—
Be silent and attend—of your own choice,
Arriving furtively in domino,
Without duenna, usher, page or guard,
Here in Don Cæsar's room alone with him.
This, being published, would at Rome annul
Your marriage; queenly gadabouts obtain
Small mercy there. But mark, the Holy See
Need nothing learn, if you consent to this:—
A letter for the King despatched at once

To the chief notary, and you are free.
A carriage waits with money ballasted;
And hey, the 'happy couple blessing me,
By Alcantara or Toledo, swift
Across the border into Portugal—
Or where you like! We shut our eyes.

[Lays a document on the table.]

Your name.

No one but I of this adventure knows.
If you refuse, Madrid shall know to-morrow.—
No call for passion. I hold you in my hand.

Queen. What shall I do?

Don Salluste. Nothing I ask, observe,
Except your signature to show the King.
[To RUY BLAS.] You see, my friend, I only
work for you.—

Madame de Neuberg, sign.

Queen.

Oh, let me die!

Don Salluste. What is a crown? You lose a
paltry realm

To gain a world of joy. Sign. No! You kill
Yourself, then; for the blow that opes the
mouth

Of scandal, shuts on you the convent door.

Queen. Oh God!

Don Salluste. Don Cæsar loves you; is in rank
Almost your equal, a grandee of Spain.

Ruy Blas. My name is Ruy Blas; I am a lackey.

Sign nothing. Now my hand and tongue are free!

Queen. What does he say?

Ruy Blas. That I am Ruy Blas,
Don Salluste's lackey.—And I say besides,
From treachery triumphant with its axe
Upon the sufferer's neck, an honest word
Can snatch the victory; and that now at last
We two appear as shameful as we are,
I with the garb, you with the lackey's soul!

Don Salluste. He is my lackey, though he speaks too soon.

Yet let it be: 'tis time to tell the whole.
My vengeance in its essence is complete.
How do you like it?—And how Madrid will
laugh!

**You ruined me!—I have dethroned you,—I.
You banished me!—I drive you out with scorn.
You offered me your woman for a wife!—**

And I give you my lackey for a lover:
And you can marry him—Oh, certainly!
The King is dying: let the lackey's love
Make up for rank and wealth. You struck at
me,
Blasted my fame and trod me underfoot;
Then slept in peace, and thought to sleep in
peace.

You fool!

Ruy Blas. [*Having made fast all doors, and
taken DON SALLUSTE'S sword.*]

To crown your piled iniquities
You have insulted and maligned your Queen....
Too late: the door is barred.—Until this hour
God's adversary has befriended you:
If from my hands he hopes to pluck you yet,
Let him be swift with all the Host of Hell!
'Tis Heaven's turn now!—This creature has no
soul,
No wit, no sense!—You mock her whom I love,
Whose honour sits enthroned above reproach,
And I a witness and at liberty,
Knowing your whole pernicious stratagem!—
How can you hope to live a moment more?

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It is the birth-right of integrity,
Besmirched like mine and tattered though it be,
When any base, abominable knave
Outdoes atrocity, and perpetrates
Unpardonable sin against mankind,
To spit his doom of death out in his face,
And with whatever weapon comes to hand,
Hatchet, or halberd, sword or butcher's knife,
Uproot the loathsome canker from the world.

Don Salluste. No weapon on these walls—A
sword at least!

Ruy Blas. You jest now, surely—master!
Am I then

A gentleman, that you should fight with me?
A duel? Fie, my lord! I am your slave,
A valet-thing of powder and galloon,
A kitchen-knave whom people cuff; and who
In his turn—kills! I mean to kill you, sir,
As one would kill a rabid dog.

Queen. Have mercy!

Ruy Blas. Not even at your entreaty. He
must die.

Queen. Oh, spare him!

Don Salluste. Murder! Help!

Ruy Blas. Enough of that!

In with you to the slaughter-house, foul beast.

Don Salluste. Assassin! Coward! Butcher!
Devil!

Ruy Blas. No!

*[Takes the sword from the wardrobe
and returns DON SALLUSTE'S.*

I, sinner as I am, lackey and fool,
I stand for God! This sword I wield is His!
In, monster, in, where death undoubting waits!

*[Thrusts DON SALLUSTE into the smaller
room and kills him.*

Something I ought to say; and yet no words
Can utter thoughts one knows not how to
think.

That I am innocent before my heart
Is certain as your beauty—pallid now,
But perfect always. I, a dreamer born,
And you sweet dreamer also, suddenly
Were caught up in a dream that had come
true—

And was a rooted lie. In the world's eyes,
And in your censure, I appear indeed
The falsest knave; but when I dare to ask

Forgiveness, you must hold me innocent,
For were I guilty of a harmful thought
I should be tongue-tied now.

Queen. What do you want?

Ruy Blas. Your pardon, Queen.

Queen. Not with my dying breath.

[*RU Y BLAS seems about to entreat the
QUEEN again, but cannot bend him-
self to do so. He lifts the vial and
drinks the poison.*

Ruy Blas. So let it be, then. I have loved
you well,

And this will pardon me.

Queen. What have you done?

Ruy Blas. I've taken a restorative that cures
The soul of mundane life, its long disease.

Queen. Don Cæsar!

Ruy Blas. Though you hold me guilty, yet
You cannot rob my spirit of the thought
That once you loved me.

Queen. But I love you still!

Don Cæsar, from my soul I pardon you!

Ruy Blas. My name is Ruy Blas.

Queen. Oh Ruy Blas,

A QUEEN'S ROMANCE 111

You need no pardon, for I love you! See!

Now, say this was not poison! Tell me that!

Ruy Blas. It was a draught of death! But all is well.

Queen. Then I have killed you! Had I pardoned you——

Ruy Blas. I still had done the same: I could not live. . . .

Away! Out! Out of this! . . . Ah! none can know.

Your name and fame are safe, my Queen, my love. [Falls.

Queen. You must not die! I will not let you die!

Cannot my kisses call you back to life?

Ruy Blas. If I could speak my thanks! I yield my soul—

I yield it willingly, my gift to you.

Queen. And I can never give you anything!

Ruy Blas. The memory of our virgin love shall be

My happiness throughout eternity. [Dies.



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